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ENERGY DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES OFFICE OF RIVER PROTECTION REORGANIZATION

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has approved a proposal to reorganize the Office of River Protection (ORP). In order to improve the management and operation of the office, several new senior executive service management positions and up to 60 new staff positions will be created.

The increase to required staff and new organizational structure reflects ORP's shift in procurement strategy from privatization to a more traditional government-owned operation.

"Our plans to reorganize and strengthen the office are essential to our success," said Harry Boston, ORP's Acting Manager. "With the support of Secretary Richardson and Assistant Secretary Carolyn Huntoon, we will provide the resources needed to create a more effective and productive waste treatment program at Hanford."

ORP is responsible for managing, characterizing, retrieving - and ultimately treating and disposing - approximately 54 million gallons of highly radioactive and hazardous waste stored in 177 underground tanks at Hanford.

Under the approved proposal, ORP will initially fill several key positions, including five senior executive service management positions and one new position for a Chief Counsel. ORP currently has a staff of 90 positions.

In addition, the nuclear safety responsibilities of Hanford's former Regulatory Unit will be assigned to the ORP Manager. Under the privatization approach, a separate regulatory unit was established to regulate nuclear safety for a contractor-owned facility. However, with the decision Secretary Richardson reached in May to proceed with a Government-owned facility, clear authority and accountability for nuclear safety has been assigned to the ORP Manager.

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Note: Congress created The Office of River Protection in 1998 to manage the nation's largest and most complex environmental cleanup project - retrieval and treatment of tank waste at the Hanford Site. More background information on the Office of River Protection can be found on the office's Web site at: <http://www.hanford.gov/orp>

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